

# Delta Lenscapes

photoku

JIANQING ZHENG









*Also by Jianqing Zheng*

A WAY OF LOOKING

THE DOG YEARS OF REEDUCATION

ENFORCED RUSTICATION IN

THE CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

DELTA SUN, AND THE LANDSCAPE OF MIND



# *Delta Lenscapes*

photoku

JIANQING ZHENG



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# *Introduction*

A hobby I have remained passionate about since 2008 is using photographs I have taken of the Mississippi Delta to create photoku. Photoku, shortened from photographic haiku, reflects the genre of haiga, a Japanese visual art composed of drawing and haiku in calligraphy. Like haiga, photoku reveals an aesthetic experience of seeing something new through the working of the two components that complement each other. In other words, photoku is ekphrastic, a continuation of what is conveyed in a photograph or a progression of what is imagined from imagery.

Thus, haiku and photograph in a photoku are both interactive and independent. The visual image and the poetic expression grip a moment to respond to life and nature; they also catch a moment that brings an aesthetic experience for creative and mental growth. That's why I am interested in writing haiku to complement my photographs. However, in writing my haiku, I intend to extend the meaning rather than illustrate the images.

Photoku in *Delta Lenses* are grouped in three parts: River and Land, Moonscapes, and Variable Dimensions. Part One shows snapshots of the Mississippi Delta and the haiku that complement them. Part Two shows a way of looking at the moon over the vast Delta land in a mind-tranquilizing atmosphere. Part Three shows a recreative experience: turning the photographs into variable dimensions to find a way of making something new for abstract art.

In short, photoku is an art form that juxtaposes photographs and haiku to create a moment of aesthetic appreciation for the eye and the mind. It can make an impression with both a visual and figurative effect. So, it offers a concrete moment for the mind to compare and interrelate.

These photoku offer a way of seeing the Mississippi Delta and of living a humble life there. It's killing time for the joy of life. It's fun doing it.

# RIVER AND LAND





*morning jazz a tugboat's toot in and out*

delta life so flat i often look up at the sky







*stay home stay safe  
birds chirp freely  
in the dream*

*first snow  
delight soon disappears  
into dark dusk*







*delta tour vague memory of flatland*

blues highway  
every view  
out of the blue





delta life ... either way is flat







*balmy air*

*a couple's chat*

*trails on*



*Mr. Blue Sky  
countless cowbells  
in the air*





*hello stranger  
her song to and fro  
on autumn wind*





warm morning  
the sun  
unfurls its light





lonely road emptiness not just mine





**spring forward  
the sun is warmer  
and warmer**





*autumn dusk  
a moment alone  
on the porch*

*almost 8 a.m.  
wish to see a student  
hurrying to class*







**quarantine  
life still colorful  
each day**





quarantine--  
new life so admired  
this odd spring





*quarantine  
more time to see  
what i fail to spot*





new year's day  
a mockingbird's song  
somewhere

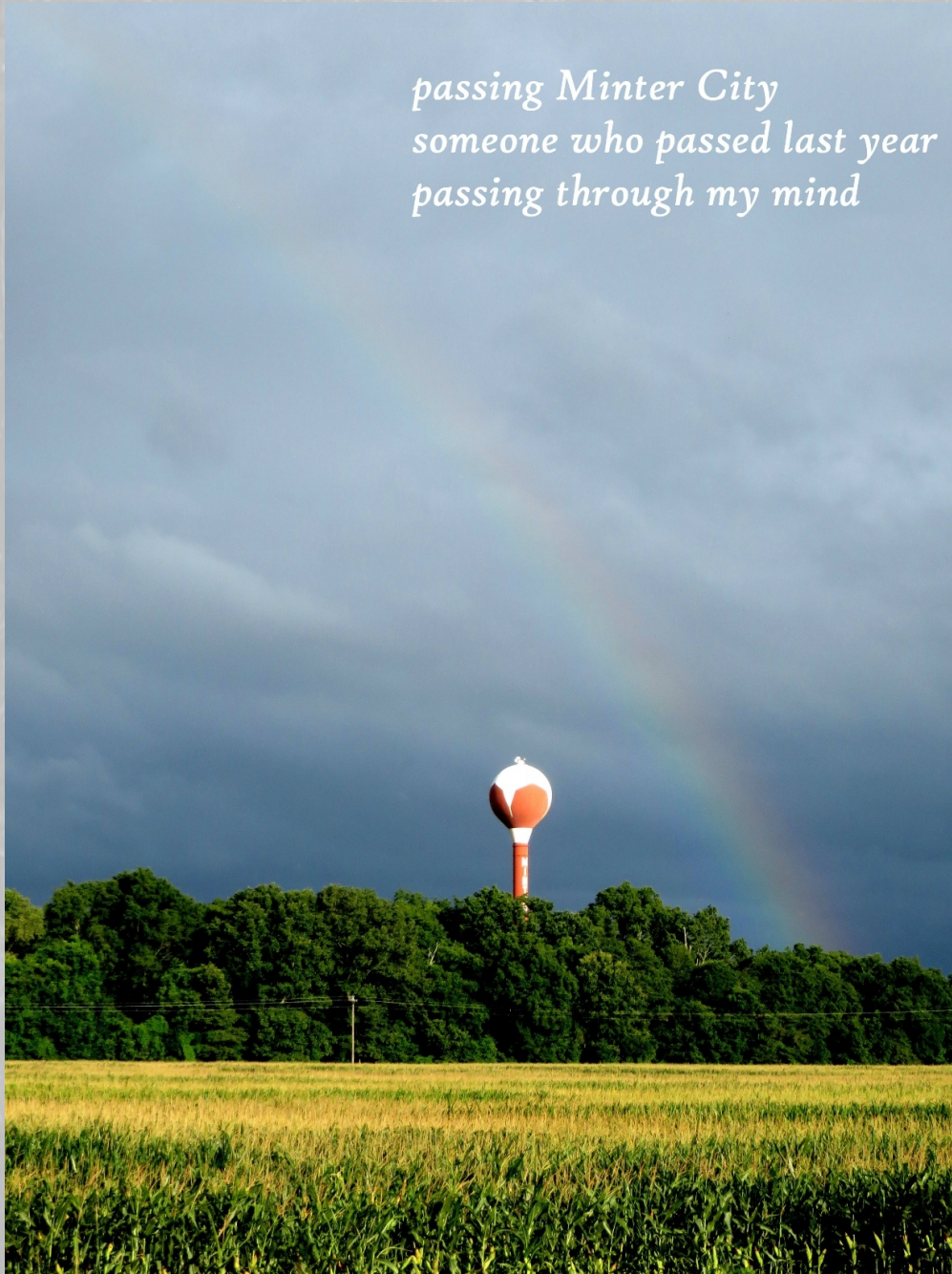


*long silence pier fishing at dawn*





*passing Minter City  
someone who passed last year  
passing through my mind*

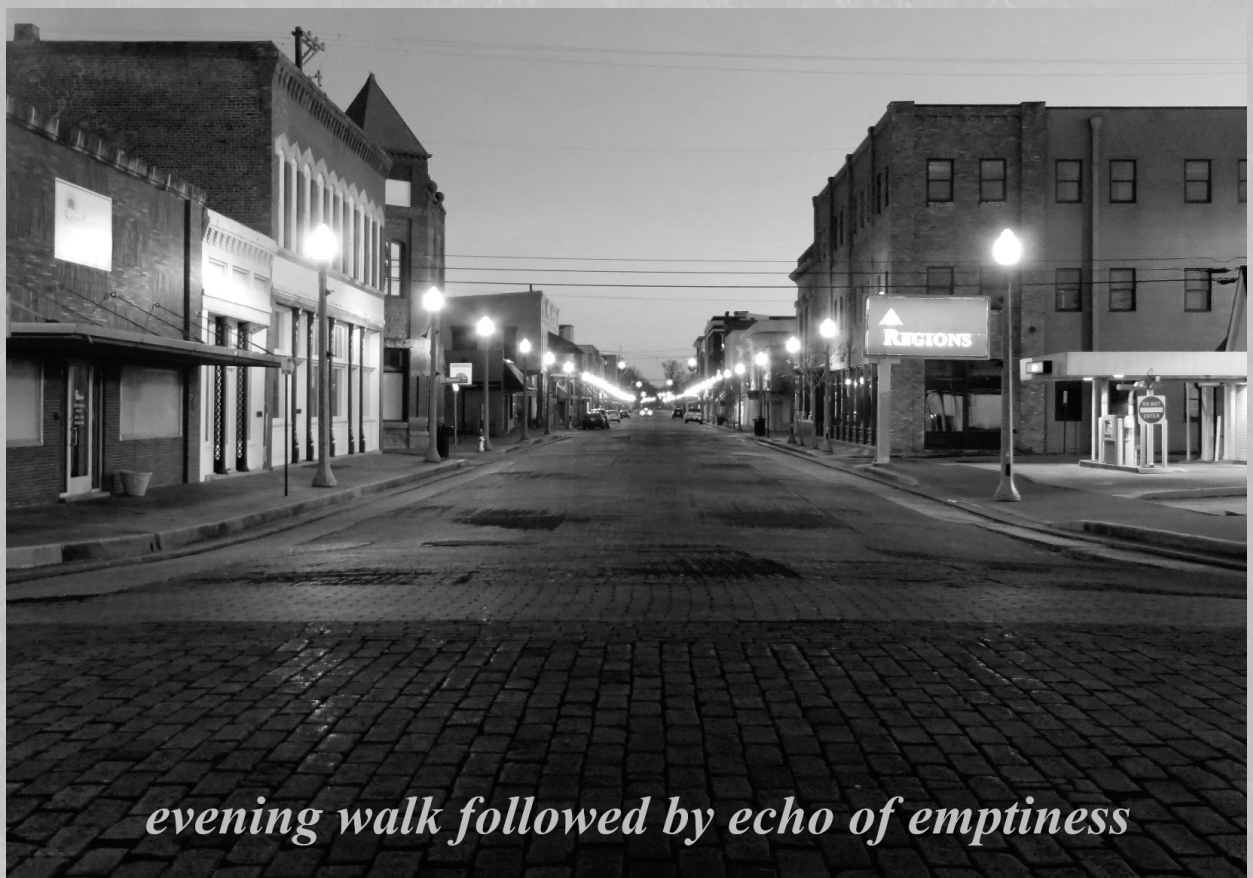




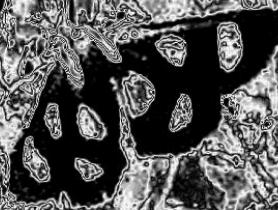


worn path  
sunset a pinwheel  
in her hand





*QUIET CAMPUS  
INVERTED FOR ITS  
HIDDEN BEAUTY*





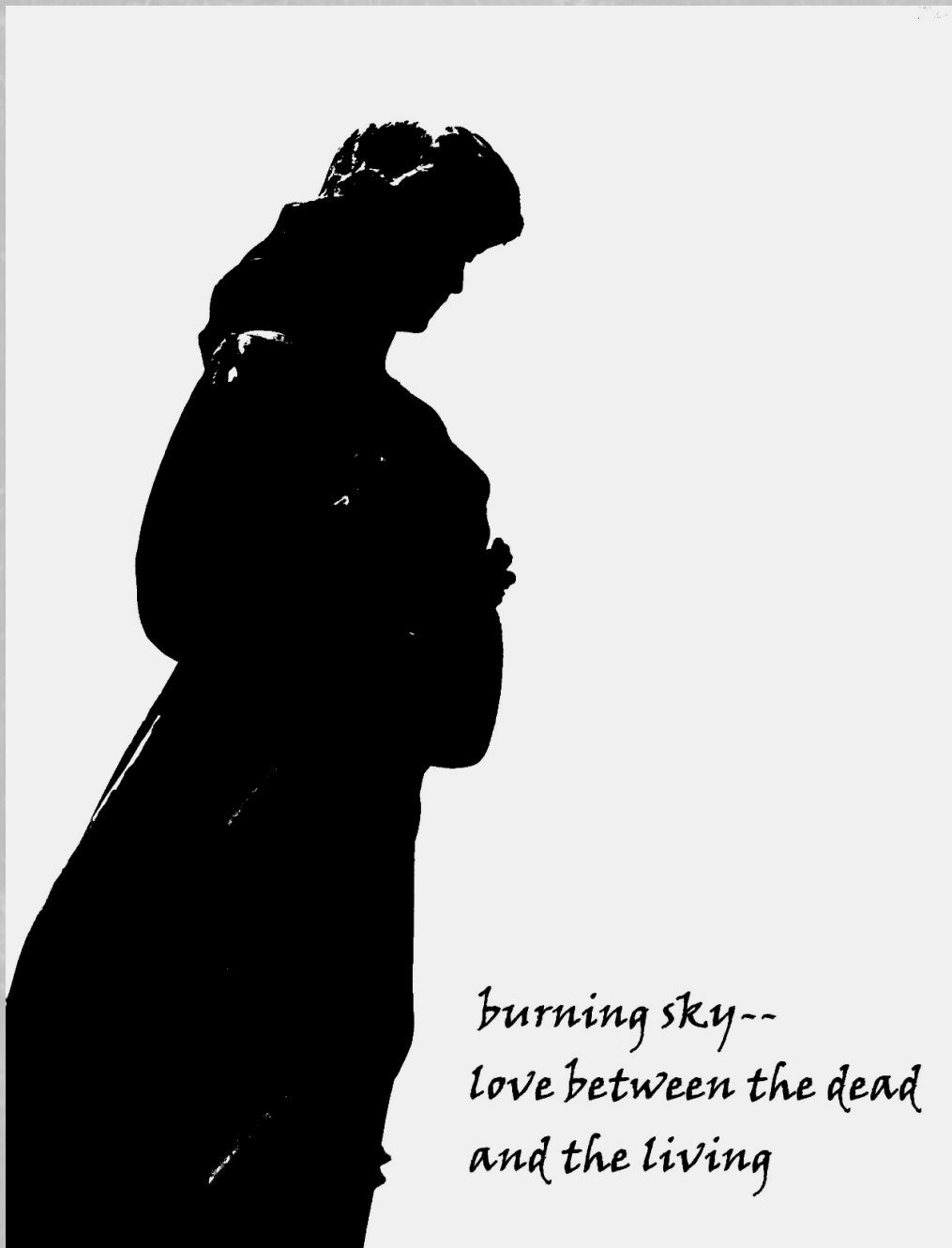
*evening class  
taking students to the tower  
to watch sunset*



*inverted  
life still  
as it is*







*burning sky--  
love between the dead  
and the living*



*winter dawn  
the last sparkling  
of sparse stars*





weeklong freeze  
scampering squirrels  
no longer seen



*quiet sunday  
waiting to snap shots  
of hummingbirds*





February snow  
feeling warmer  
under the quilt





*harvested fields  
floating memories  
of farm life*





*Natchez Trace  
pause a second to smell  
spring breeze*



stunned  
by sudden drumbeat  
dry lightning



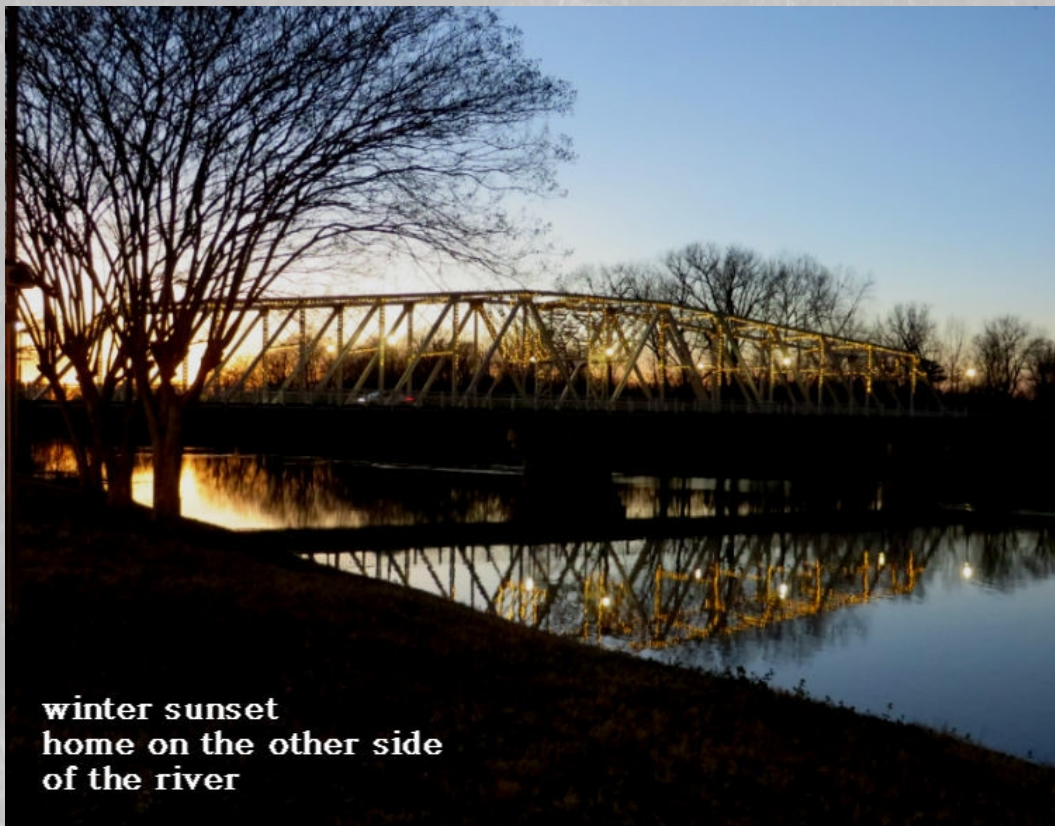




alone time  
colorful dancing  
of the heart







winter sunset  
home on the other side  
of the river





quiet dawn  
a new beginning  
of autumn sun



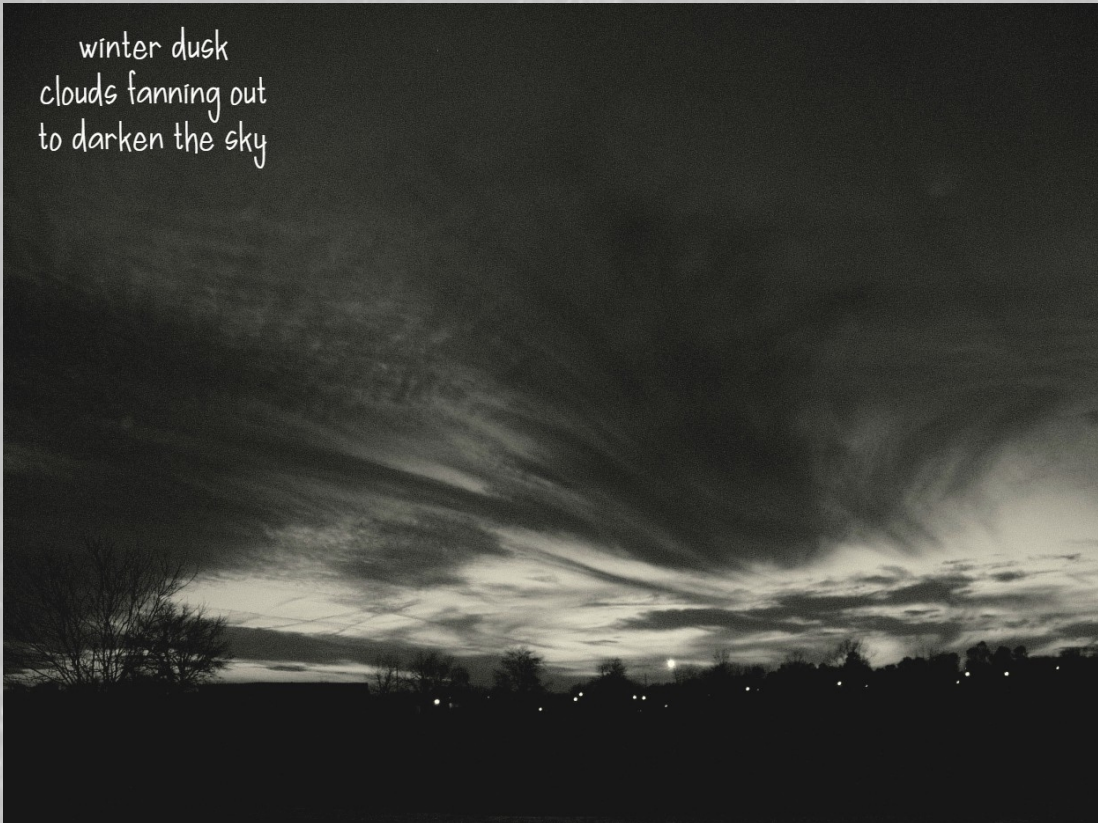


road closed--  
behind the fence  
bushes and weeds

road closed--  
behind the fence  
bushes and weeds



winter dusk  
clouds fanning out  
to darken the sky

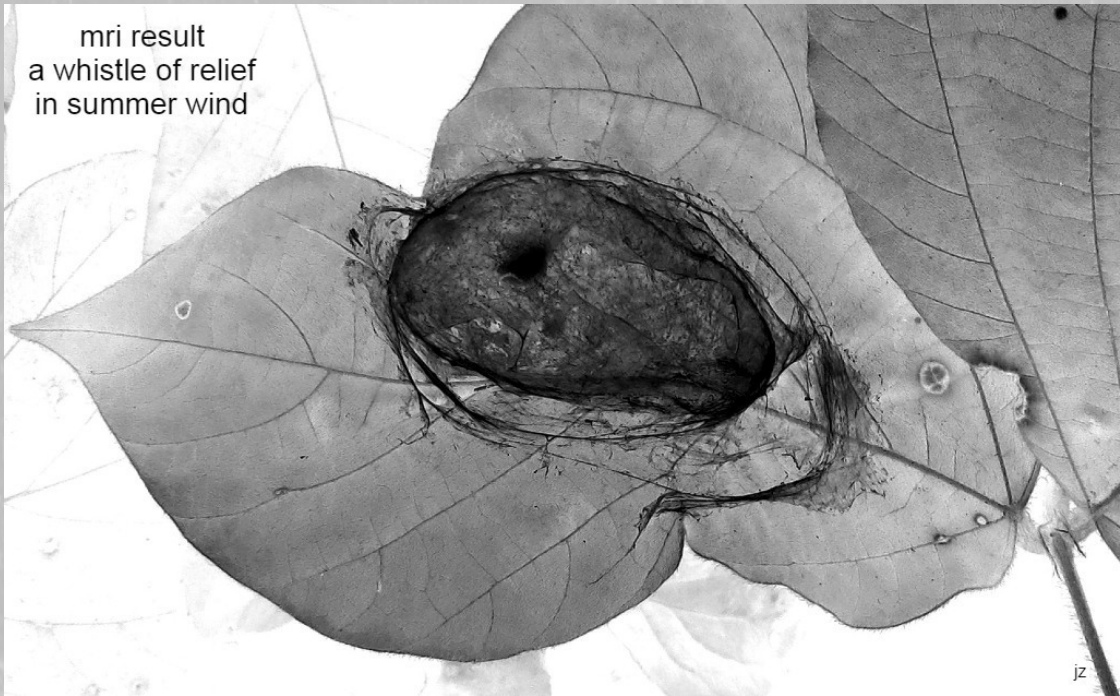






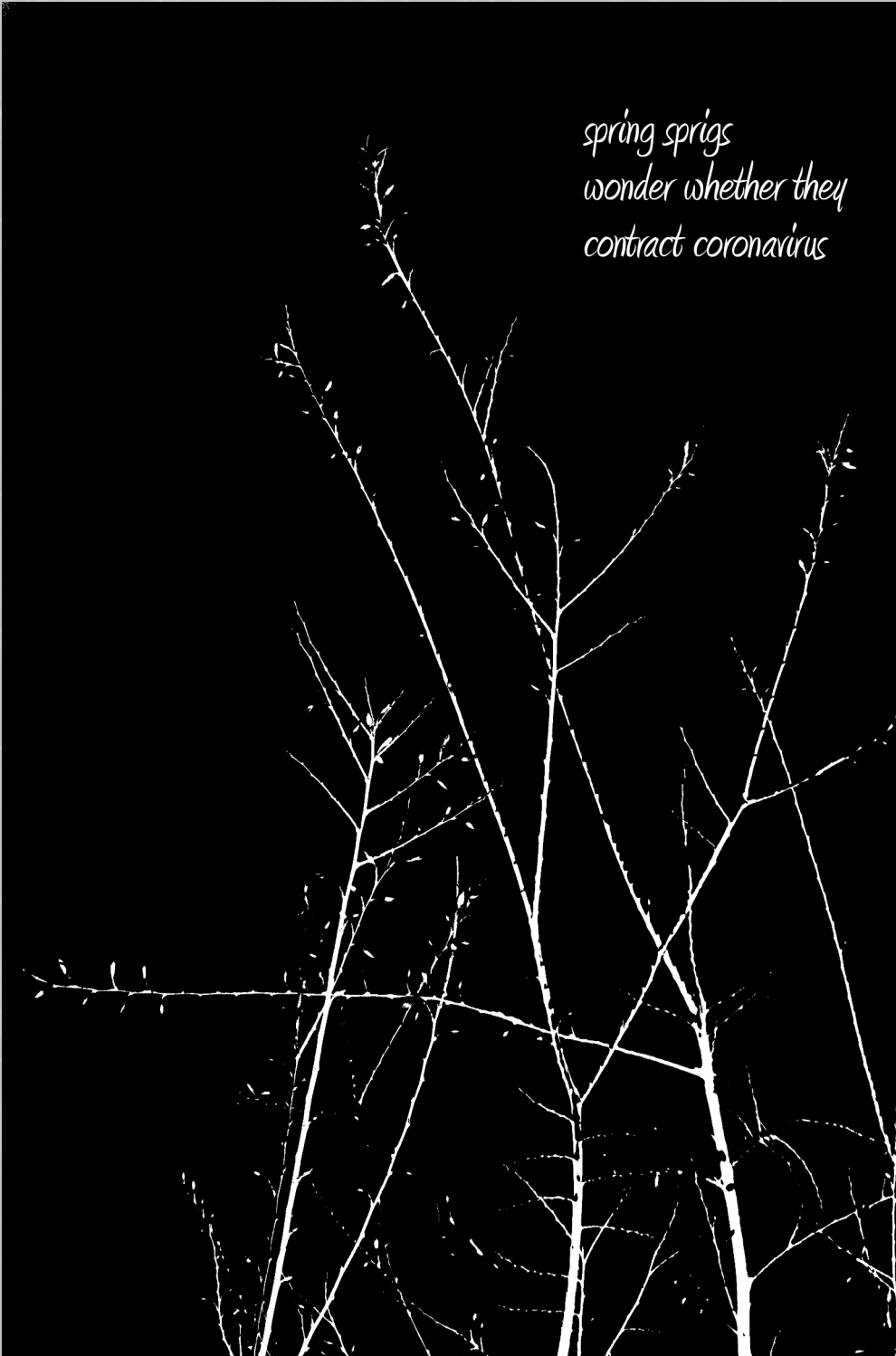
winter sun  
each glitter a flap  
of the wind

mri result  
a whistle of relief  
in summer wind





*spring sprigs  
wonder whether they  
contract coronavirus*



# MOONSCAPES





alone time for the mind after night class



*camping night  
all of a sudden  
a wolf's howl*





honey moon a quiet stroll in four movements



*spring rain mushrooms emerge here and there*





*empty sky  
the balloon let go  
finds its way*





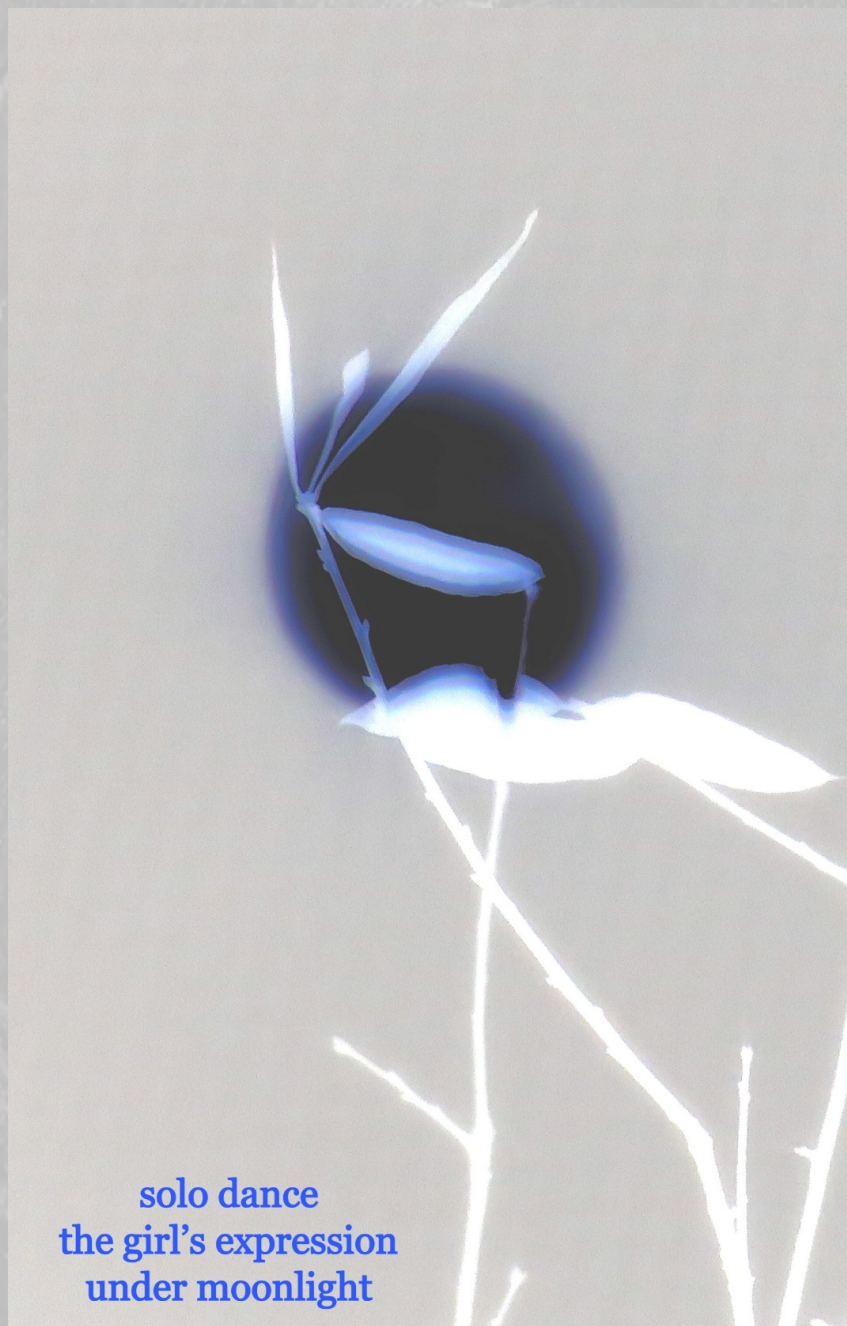
deep autumn  
biting a persimmon  
for its fullness



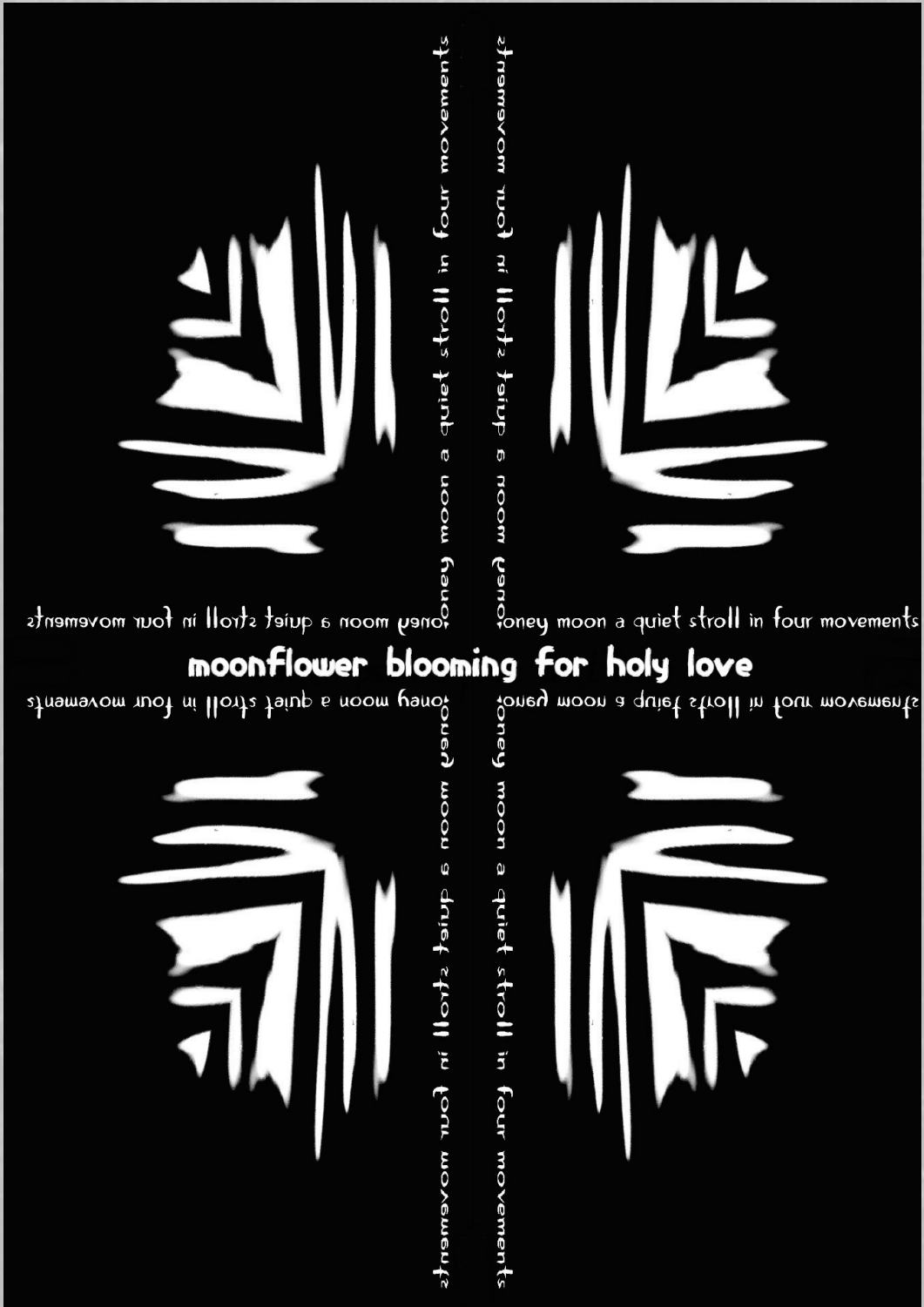


*missing grandma  
a sweet grape rolls  
in my mouth*





solo dance  
the girl's expression  
under moonlight





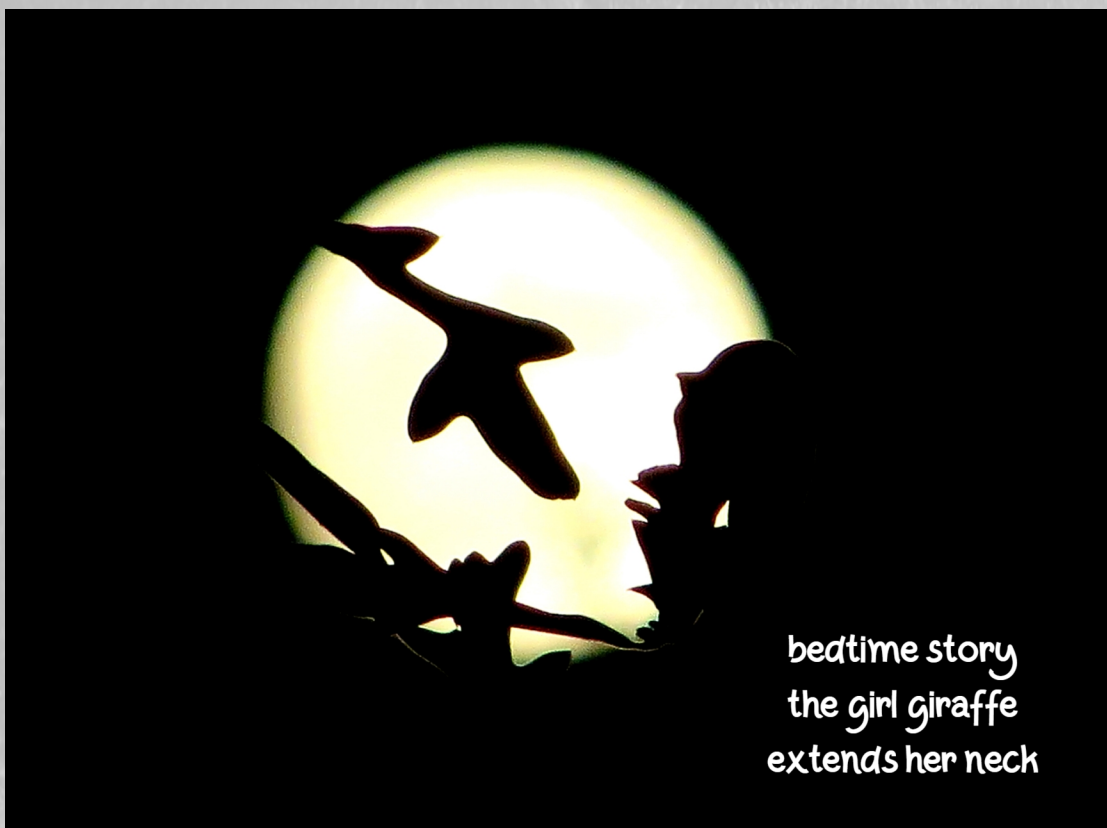
birdwatching  
watched also  
by the birds





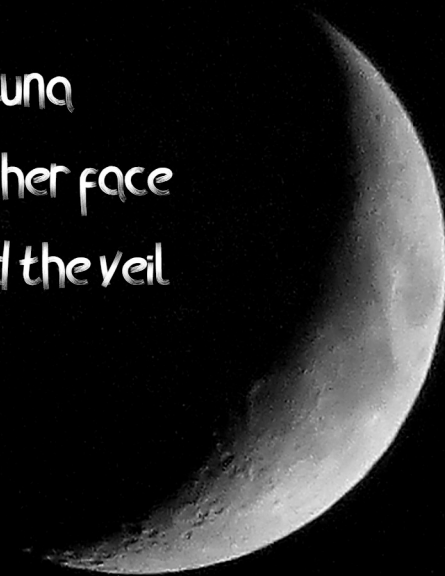
*round window view into a new view*





bedtime story  
the girl giraffe  
extends her neck

Luna  
hiding her face  
behind the veil



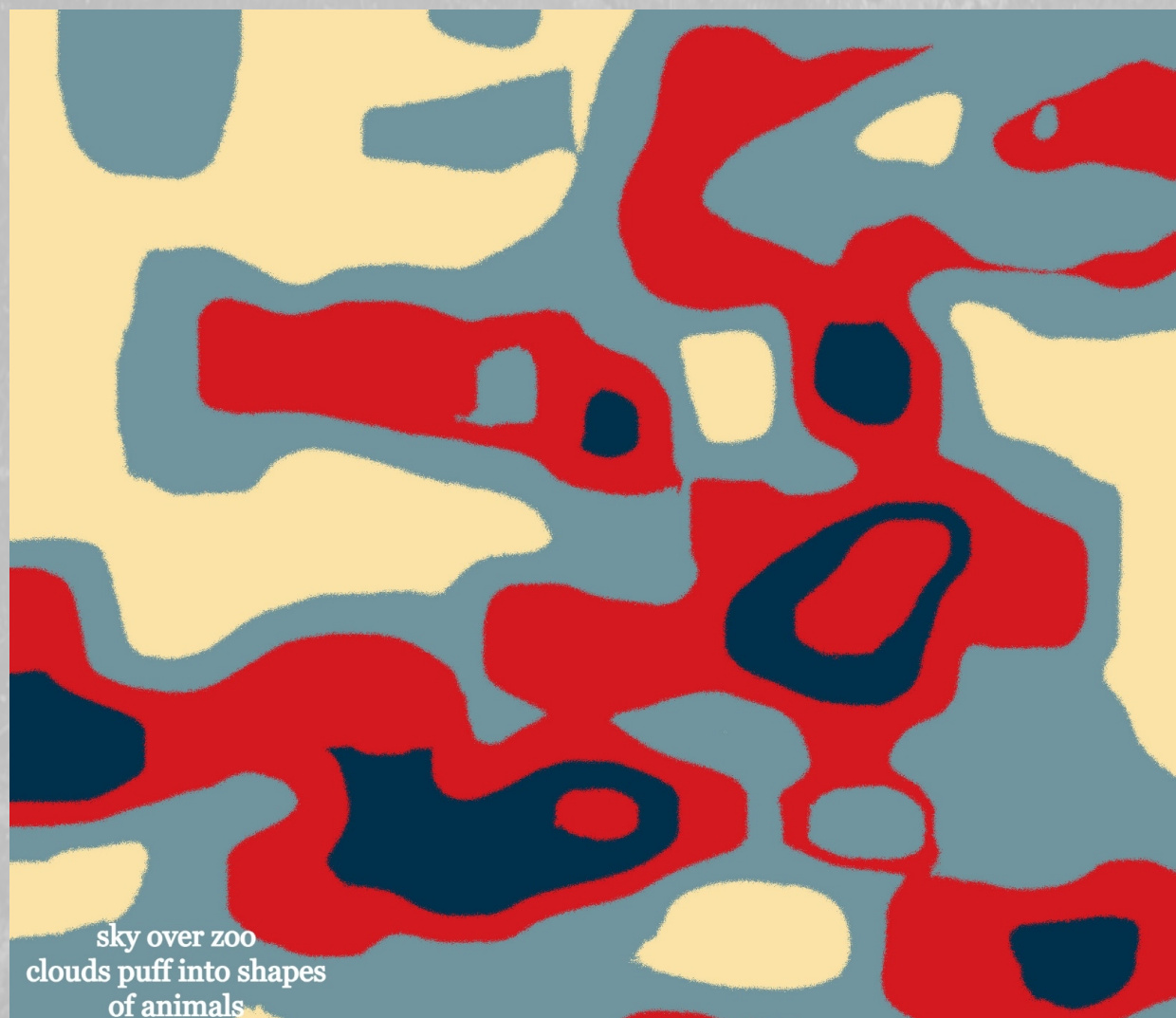




summer camp  
shaping mud into  
a dorodango

# VARIABLE DIMENSIONS



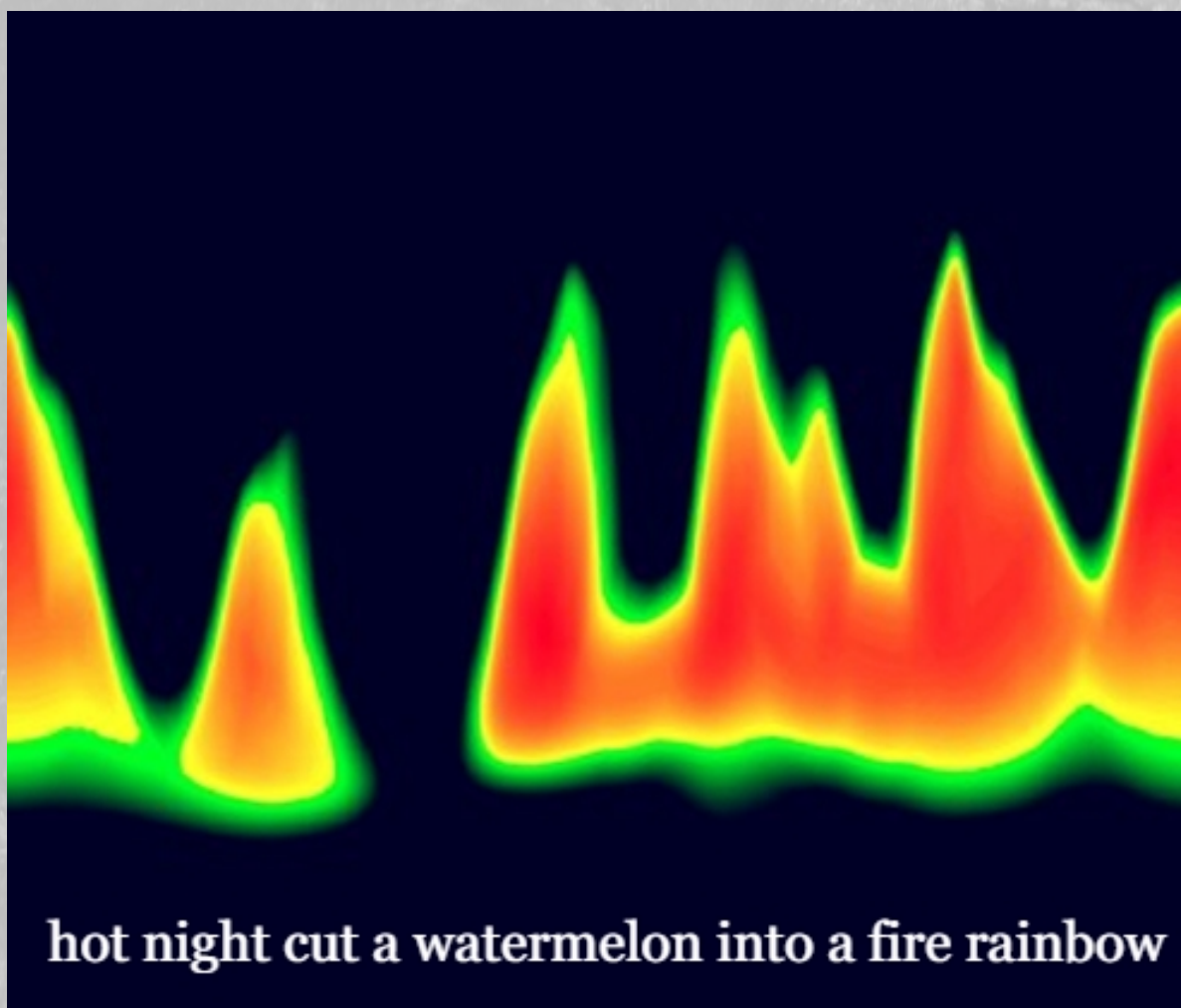


sky over zoo  
clouds puff into shapes  
of animals



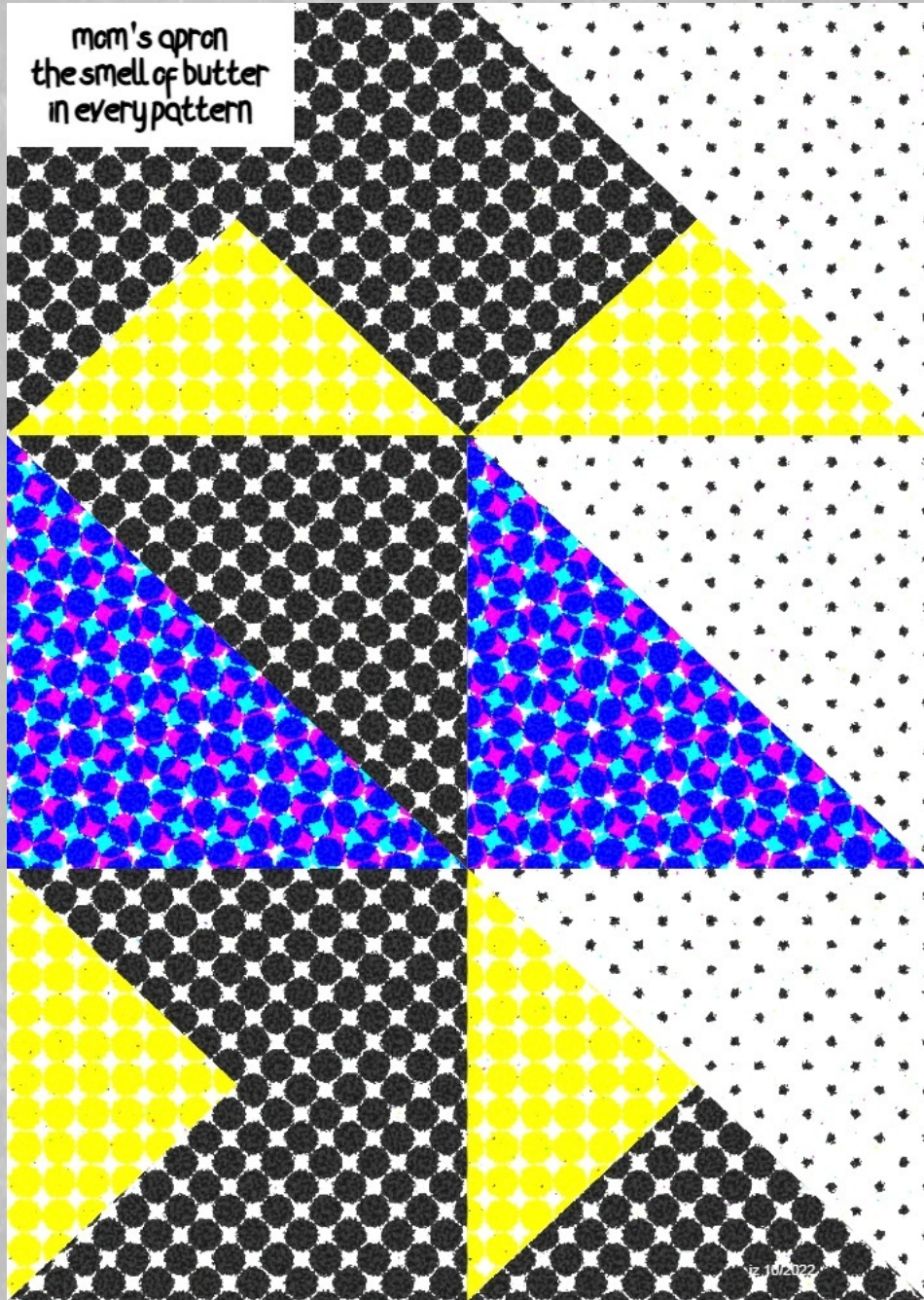
*winter break  
a long dream  
for spring*



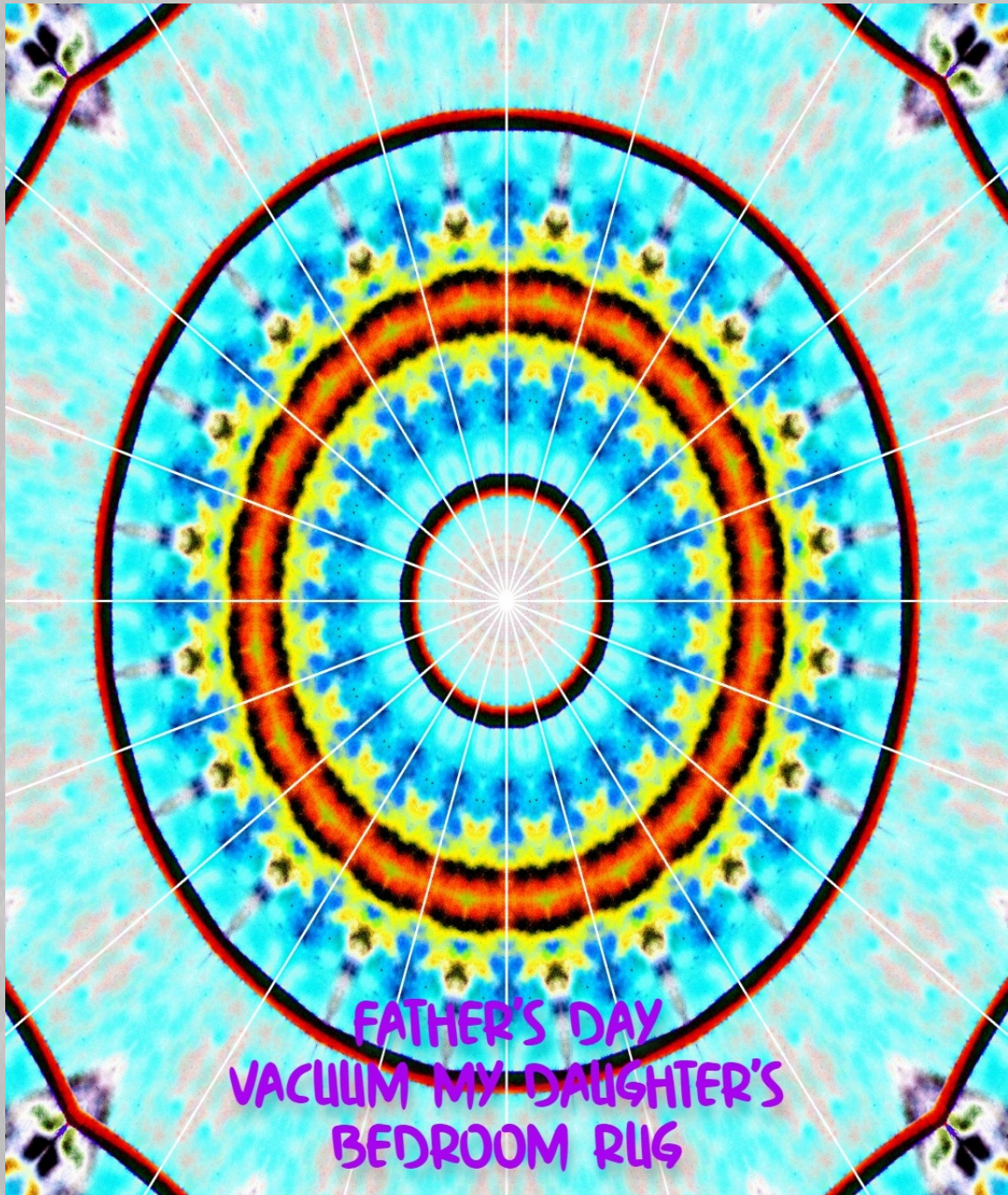


hot night cut a watermelon into a fire rainbow

mom's apron  
the smell of butter  
in every pattern









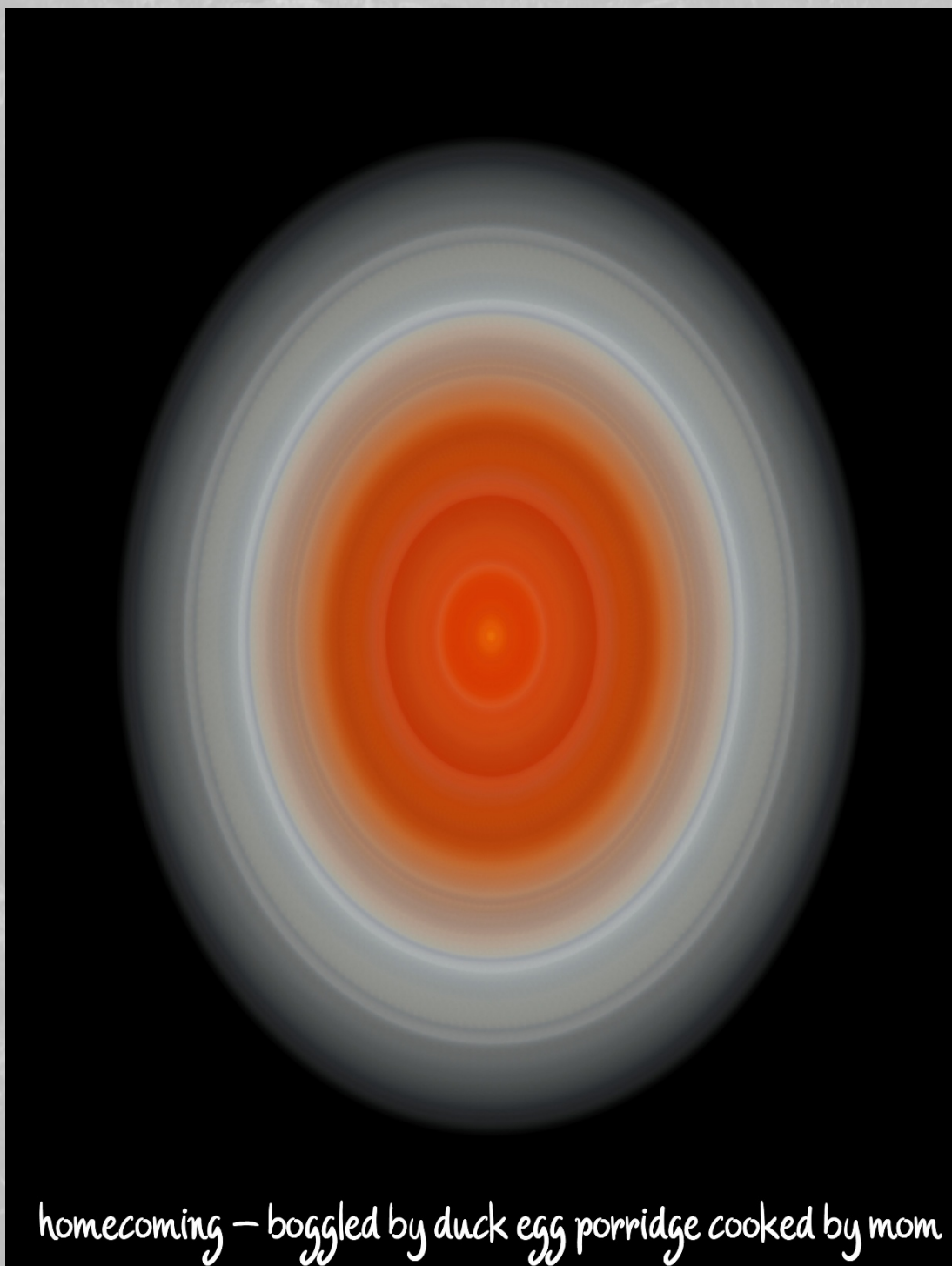


*Christmas eve  
hang a patchwork quilt  
handmade by mother*





summer heat a Halfeti rosebud ready to unfurl

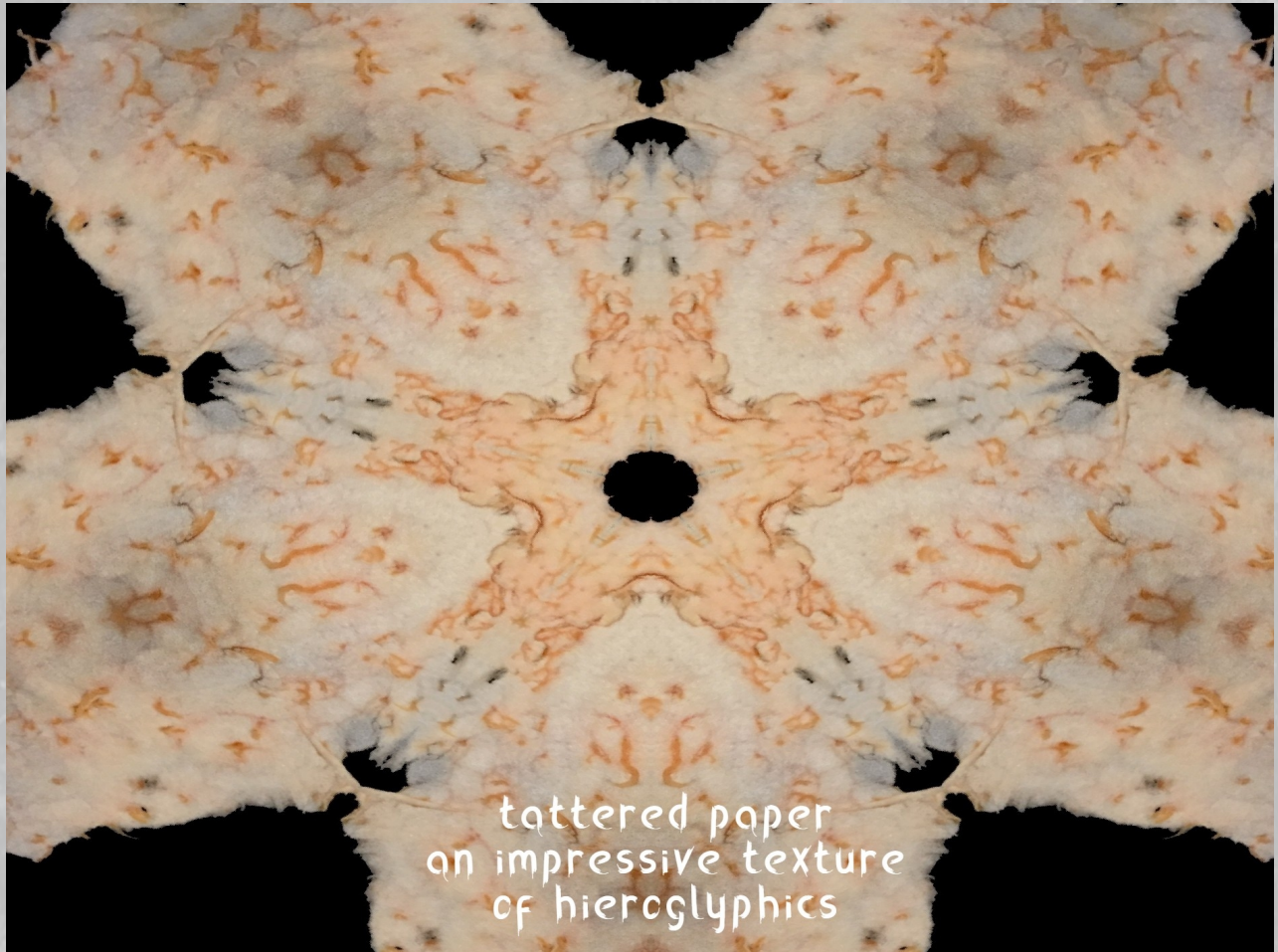


homecoming — boggled by duck egg porridge cooked by mom









tattered paper  
an impressive texture  
of hieroglyphics





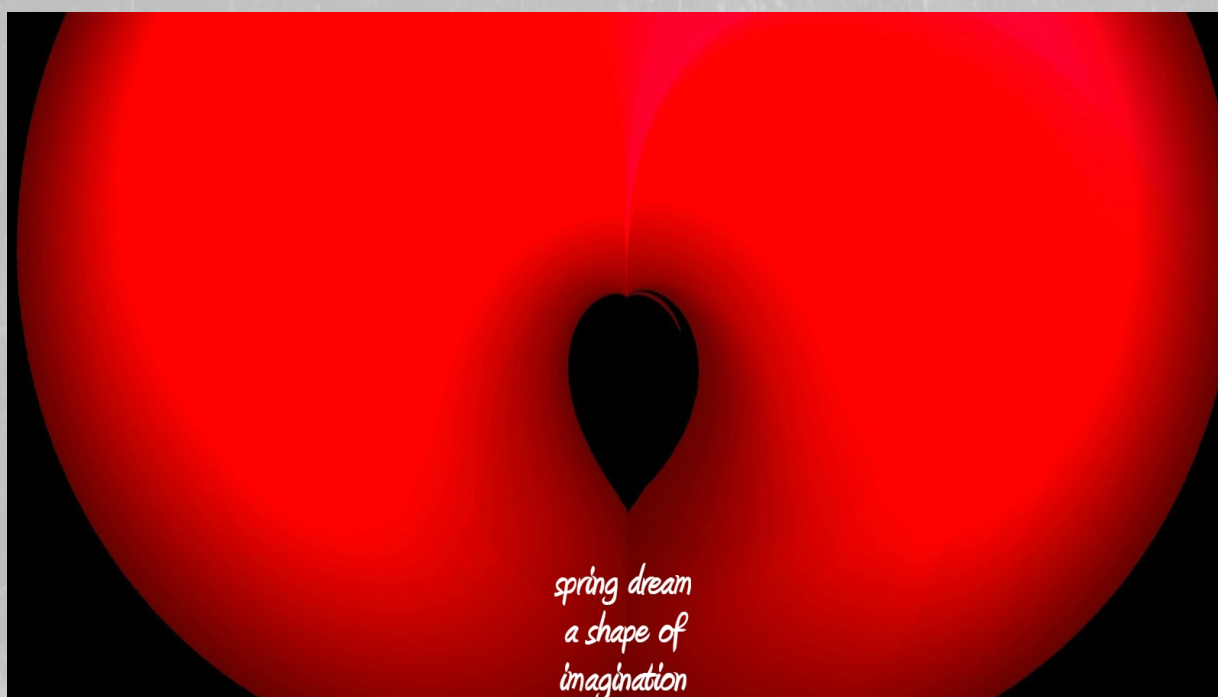
autumn stroll he puts a shawl around her shoulders





bean dance  
free movement  
of wild wind





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ROSE PERIWINKLES – Vipanjeet Kaur

VARIATIONS ON THE PLANETS – Ettinger & Gilbert

WAITING FOR AN ORACLE – petro c.k.



## *About the Author*

Jianqing Zheng's poetry books include *A Way of Looking*, *The Dog Years of Reeducation*, *Enforced Rustication in the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, *Delta Sun*, and *The Landscape of Mind*. His edited books include *African American Haiku: Cultural Visions* and *The Other World of Richard Wright: Perspectives on His Haiku*. He has received three poetry fellowships from the Mississippi Arts Commission and teaches at Mississippi Valley State University, where he edits *Valley Voices: A Literary Review*. His latest publication is *Still Motion*, coauthored with Leo Touchet.

He has also published more than 20 photographic essays about the river and land of the Mississippi Delta, with topics of African American Hospitals and Clinics, country churches, shacks, cultural flavors of hot tamales, Emmett Till, Mississippi John Hurt, Robert Johnson, The River's Business, and ghost places, in journals, including *Arkansas Review*, *Intégrité*, *Maine Digital Collaborative*, *Mississippi Folklife*, and *The Southern Quarterly*. A few of his photographs were used on book or magazine covers.

Zheng's photoku have appeared in *Akita International Haiku Network*, *Cantos*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Cold Moon Journal*, *CHO*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Drifting Sands*, *Failed Haiku*, *Fireflies' Light*, *Haiga in Focus*, *Haiku Commentary*, *NHK Haiku Masters*, *Prune Juice*, *Star 82 Review*, and *The Mamba*.

In *Delta Lenscapes*, Jianqing Zheng once again demonstrates his talent in the field of photoku. The Mississippi Delta, the cradle of the blues, is an incredibly diverse landscape offering infinite insights and moods, perfectly reflected here in the combination of photography and haiku. This kaleidoscope of shapes, colors, and atmospheres stands as a tribute to the Mississippi Delta. *Delta Lenscapes* is an "exhibition" full of special moments and profound moods, where everyone will discover their favorite photoku.

*Claudia Brefeld, Editor of Haiga in Focus*

Jianqing Zheng is an accomplished haiku poet and photographer. He combines these arts in this excellent collection of photoku, a version of Japanese haiga, and reveals the depth of his understanding and appreciation of the Mississippi Delta. While the haiku and photos stand successfully on their own, they fully enhance one another in these skillful, and in some cases quite experimental, haiga. Each page of this book draws readers into vivid and moving Delta moments not to be missed.

*Ce Rosenow, Former President of the Haiku Society of America*



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